

from Iraq. Twenty-three of us had stood up and said no to that war, and afterwards, we worried very much about what would happen with our troops in what was shaping up to be a long war with no exit strategy. Opening up his office here in the Capitol, Senator Byrd organized us, saying, "We need to talk about ways that we can bring this war to an end."

He cared so much about everything he did here, from working to create opportunity for West Virginians and all Americans to maintaining the traditions and the dignity of the Senate. And for me, just to have been in his presence and to watch him work has really been an amazing experience, and so I am proud to pay tribute to him today.

Senator Byrd stayed here through thick and thin, with a cane or a wheelchair, through the sheer force of will, suffering to be in this place that he loved so much and that he respected so much. There isn't a Member on either side of the aisle that didn't respect Senator Byrd for his intelligence, his strength, his extraordinary biography, and his dedication to the people of his State.

What a legacy he leaves. It is a great loss for his family, for all of us in the Senate, for the people of his beloved State of West Virginia and for all Americans. I extend my deepest condolences to his family.

#### REMEMBERING CODE TALKER MOSE BELLMARD

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, it was 2 years ago that I worked to pass and have signed into law by the President the Code Talkers Recognition Act, a bill to give Congressional Medals to the many Native American Code Talkers who served in World Wars I and II. Today, I wish to honor an original Code Talker, Mose Bellmard, a Kaw Indian who bravely served our country during World War I. As a veteran and ardent supporter of the armed services, I always take pride when I have the opportunity to recognize the service of fine Oklahomans like him.

Bellmard, considered by many to be one of the last hereditary chiefs of the Kaw Indians, was born on February 16, 1891, to Josephine and Leonard Bellmard in Indian territory. U.S. involvement in World War I began when Bellmard was 26, and, even though Native Americans were not yet considered full citizens of the United States, he was one of the first to volunteer. He trained at Fort Sill in Lawton, OK, was made a 1st lieutenant with Company E in Oklahoma's 1st Infantry Unit.

After a few weeks of training, he deployed to the frontlines of the war in France. The setting was dangerous, and a number of his men were quickly killed during routine patrols of their area. Upon investigation, Bellmard realized that the Germans had painted sections of barbed wire that allowed them to easily spot his patrolmen's

movements. Creatively, he thought to use a large bed mattress—instead of a person—to draw fire so his units could locate and neutralize the enemy. The scheme apparently worked, and in addition to saving lives his unit was able to use the tactic to destroy a number of German gun installations along the Western front.

But this would not be Bellmard's only contribution to the war effort, nor would it be his most impactful. When Bellmard entered the war, the Germans had been able to decipher nearly every one of the Allies' codes, making it difficult for them to operate in secrecy. Bellmard recognized this problem, and as the leader of the Native American unit saw a tremendous asset in his soldiers' diverse languages. These languages were completely foreign to Europeans and had never been written down. They were ideal candidates for new codes.

Lieutenant Bellmard suggested to his superiors that his unit's men be scattered throughout troop dispatch points as communications officers. There, he reasoned, they would be able to disseminate orders in their native tongues and then translate them back into English. His plan was put into practice and quickly proved to be reliable and secure. Bellmard and his original Code Talkers of Oklahoma allowed many Allied forces to move safely through battle zones without fear of interception, and to this date there are no records of the Central Powers ever cracking their "code."

Bellmard's suggestion carried over into World War II, during which Code Talkers were widely recruited and were critical to the Allied Forces' victory in the Pacific theater. Bellmard's simple idea to use Native American tongues to thwart and confuse enemies proved a lasting and effective tool for the U.S. military. It is fitting he was promoted to the rank of captain for his role.

Unfortunately, Captain Bellmard died before we could thank him personally for his contribution to our freedom. But our thanks are still important, especially as we remember Independence Day and the cost of securing that freedom. We owe our sincere gratitude to all American heroes like Mose Bellmard, and I pray that more emerge in generations to come.

#### TRIBUTE TO COLONEL PHILIP C. SKUTA

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a close friend of the Senate, COL Phil Skuta. Over the past 2 years, Colonel Skuta has served as the Director of the Marine Corps Liaison Office to the U.S. Senate.

Throughout Colonel Skuta's service in the Senate he has escorted 14 CODELs to 27 countries. I have traveled with Phil to visit our troops in Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Last year, I had the privilege of spending Thanksgiving with the Wyoming Army National Guard 115th Fires

Brigade in Kuwait. With only 2 weeks' notice, Colonel Skuta and his team provided the support to execute this trip. As a selfless leader, he did not task a junior officer to take on the trip. He postponed his Thanksgiving plans with family to be with our troops in the Middle East.

Throughout these travels I got to know Colonel Skuta very well. Colonel Skuta is a native of Williamsport, PA. Phil joined the Marine Corps in 1984 through the Platoon Leader's Class program while studying at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.

From Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to Joint Guardian and Iraqi Freedom, Colonel Skuta has led his marines through many trying and dangerous situations. On his most recent deployment, he led the Second Battalion, Seventh Marines into Iraq to train and conduct operations with the Iraqi Security Forces. The 2d Battalion, seventh Marines' primary area of operations was Ramadi and west of the Euphrates River in Al Anbar province.

Throughout his career he has handed down from one marine to the next his excellent leadership skills. Colonel Skuta's example will teach the next generation that will come to know the Marine Corps. Under Phil's leadership, steady hand and sharp instincts, the USMC Senate liaison team has well served General Conway and all marines. The USMC liaison office has provided invaluable support for the Senate.

While the U.S. Senate and Marine Corps are losing a valuable and trusted ally in this body, we wish Colonel Skuta well on his next assignment to be Director of the USMC Strategic Initiatives Group.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO AL SMITH

• Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today I recognize the exemplary work of Allen Smith, Jr., of Helena, MT. This week, Al will be awarded the American Association for Justice Partnership Award in recognition for his work as the executive director of the Montana Trial Lawyers Association. I commend Al for all his work on behalf of the justice system and Montana's strong network of legal advocates.

The mission of the American Association of Justice is "to promote a fair and effective justice system—and to support the work of attorneys in their efforts to ensure that any person who is injured by the misconduct or negligence of others can obtain justice in America's courtrooms, even when taking on the most powerful interests." I can think of no one that reflects this mission more than Al Smith.

Since joining the team at the Montana Trial Lawyers Association in 1997, Al has shown a commitment to promoting justice and fairness in our